

Date: August 2003

To: All EMS Providers  
All EMS Training Centers

From: Alonzo W. Smith, Director  
SC DHEC Division of EMS

Re: Change in Reciprocity Policy

The purpose of the reciprocity policy is to facilitate the process of issuing a SC state certification to EMTs from other states who move to SC and wish to work in SC as an EMT. Over the years several changes to the reciprocity policy have taken place in order to keep the system user-friendly while working together to ensure each candidate meets the minimum requirements for certification in SC.

Prior to implementation of the National Registry Process, every candidate had to “challenge” the SC certification examination prior to receiving a SC certification. In addition, the Paramedic was allowed a “provisional” 90 day certification while waiting to challenge the examination. After the National Registry Process was implemented in SC, the “old” state certification quarterly “pool” examinations became history as the National Registry examination became the standard.

Due to this change, the reciprocity policy was revised by automatically granting a SC certification to any out-of-state EMT who was able to document South Carolina’s minimum required training standard. The policy exempted the out-of-state candidates from having to “challenge” the SC certification examination. These candidates (Intermediates & Paramedics only) were given a SC certificate expiration date equal to their out-of-state certificate expiration date but not to exceed a three-year cycle. The Basic EMT reciprocity candidates who held an out-of-state EMT credential and were NOT Nationally Registered were granted either their out-of-state certificate expiration date up to but not exceeding a one-year “provisional” certification. During their provisional status as an EMT-Basic in SC, candidates were required to become Nationally Registered EMT-Basics in order to receive re-certification of their SC EMT-Basic credential.

This revision of South Carolina’s reciprocity policy produced some unexpected and unanticipated problems for the state. Currently in South Carolina, all initial Intermediates and initial Paramedics must become Nationally Registered to obtain a “first-time” SC certification at that level. The problem occurred when individuals who received Intermediate or Paramedic training in SC went across state lines where these individuals were allowed to challenge another state’s certification examination, obtain certification in another state as an EMT-Intermediate or an EMT-Paramedic and then in turn apply for reciprocity in SC. These individuals were taking advantage of the reciprocity policy because they had multiple failures on the National Registry Examination and could not meet the minimum SC standard of being Nationally Registered. More recently, EMTs from SC have been crossing state lines to take Intermediate and Paramedic courses. These students then take the other state’s exam and apply for reciprocity in SC.

The SC EMS Laws & Regulations grant the Department (i.e. EMS Division of DHEC) authority to set state examination standards for certification of all levels of EMTs. In the mid 1990s, the SC state examination for all levels of EMT became the National Registry Examination. All candidates seeking an “initial” certification at any level in SC must meet the minimum standard of becoming Nationally Registered. The old “state” examination serves only for the purpose of Nurse Challenges and also Intermediate and Paramedic “refresher” candidates who were certified at that level in South Carolina prior to the implementation of the National Registry process. These existing SC Intermediates and SC Paramedics were “Grand-Fathered” into the system.

After careful evaluation of our reciprocity policy and consultation with the DHEC legal staff, the Division of EMS has found it necessary to make these revisions:

**EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY:**

The following revisions to South Carolina's Reciprocity Policy will take effect immediately and apply only to candidates who possess a valid EMT credential (any level - Basic, Intermediate or Paramedic) from a state other than SC.

**Basic:** **No Change to the Basic Policy.**

All Basic candidates who possess an out-of-state EMT-Basic credential who meet the SC minimum training standard ('94 DOT EMT-Basic course plus training in intubation & IV maintenance) and possess a valid & current BLS/CPR credential will receive a "provisional" SC EMT-Basic certification with a certificate expiration date equal to their out-of-state EMT-Basic certification up to but not exceeding a one-year certification. During their "provisional" certification status as an EMT-Basic in SC, they must obtain a National Registry EMT-Basic credential in order to be re-certified as an EMT-Basic in SC.

Candidates may be allowed to obtain the additional training in SC. The additional training (intubation & IV maintenance) must be obtained through a SC approved EMT Training Institution using a current SC certified EMT instructor (any level Basic, Intermediate or Paramedic).

**Intermediate:**

All Intermediate candidates who possess an out-of-state EMT-Intermediate credential who meet the SC minimum training standard (DOT EMT-Intermediate course plus training in intubation & IO) and possess a valid & current BLS/CPR credential will receive a "provisional" SC EMT-Intermediate certification with a certificate expiration date equal to their out-of-state EMT-Intermediate certification up to but not exceeding a one-year certification. During their "provisional" certification status as an EMT-Intermediate in SC, they must obtain a National Registry EMT-Intermediate credential in order to be re-certified as an EMT-Intermediate in SC.

Candidates may be allowed to obtain the additional training in SC. The additional training (intubation & IO) must be obtained through a SC approved EMT Training Institution using a current SC certified EMT instructor (Intermediate or Paramedic). EMT candidates from other states who possess an EMT-Cardiac Tec, EMT-Trauma Tec, or other "hybrid" certifications may be eligible for reciprocity no higher than the intermediate level in SC.

**Paramedic:**

All Paramedic candidates who possess an out-of-state EMT-Paramedic credential who meet the SC minimum training standard (DOT EMT-Paramedic course) and possess a valid & current BLS/CPR credential & a valid and current ACLS credential will receive a "provisional" SC EMT-Paramedic certification with a certificate expiration date equal to their out-of-state EMT-Paramedic certification up to but not exceeding a one-year certification. During their "provisional" certification status as an EMT-Paramedic in SC, they must obtain a National Registry EMT-Paramedic credential in order to be re-certified as an EMT-Paramedic in SC.

If you have any questions, please contact Don Whiteley or Jim Catoe at (803) 545-4204.